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Historical Sketch of Central Presb.  
Ch. of Pittsburgh - presented June 1877

The Central Presb. Ch. of Pittsburgh was organized by the Presby of Ohio Feb 10<sup>th</sup> 1858. The house of worship of the 5<sup>th</sup> Presb. Ch., rebuilt after its destruction by fire, had been solemnly dedicated to Divine Service on the first Sabb. of Dec. 1851; Rev. Nathaniel West Sen D.D. the Pastor, preaching in the morning, & Rev Prof. Jacobus, just arrived to enter on his professorship in the Theol. Sem. preaching in the evening. The Rev. Nath. West Sr having succeeded his father in charge of that Church, retired from the pastorate in 1857, and the Trustees, with consent of the congregation, having transferred the property, with its large encumbrances to a Committee of the Presby in trust.



Several efforts were made to Reorganize  
Church in this Edifice, but without  
cess. In order that the property  
might not be alienated, but might be  
by the Presbytery, with a view to promote  
interests of the denomination in these  
bounds, Wm. Jacobus moved, in Presb  
for the transfer of the property. Accord-  
ingly he was made Chairman of the Com-  
mittee of Trust, with Allan W Campbell  
D.D. & Wm. Bakewell Esq. And to this  
Committee the property was deeded  
the Trustees of the Congregation of 5<sup>th</sup> Presb  
Church for use - to be deeded to the  
Trustees of any Church that might be  
organized by the Presby, on these premises  
or, in case the Sale of the Church should  
be determined on instead, then to be  
applied to any well established orga-  
nization in the same connection, or to  
need Church enterprise in the city. On  
when a new Church, called the Central



Presby. Church, came to be organized, as well appear hereafter, the property was regularly transferred by the Presbytery Committee to their Trustees, as provided in the Deed of Trust.

Prior to this movement, however, the question was seriously discussed in Presby. whether it was wise to establish a congregation on these premises, so conspicuous to other of our Churches. The First & Second, when they were conjoined, were able to accommodate the Presby. element of our population, as then appeared. It was earnestly maintained that our denomination would be best served by the sale of the property, with a view to location further off from the Centre. Against this it was contended that our accommodations in the City were none too ample, with this House included; and that moreover there was a call for plain settings of this sort; and that, to abandon the



house would be, in effect, to turn over an important class of our worshippers to other denominations - this view prevail, and on 13 Jan'y 1858, the following action was unanimously adopted by Presbytery "Resolved that early announcement be made of the desire & plan of this Presby, to organize Presby. Church in the late Fifth Church Edifice; and that we hereby appoint Rev. W<sup>r</sup> Jacobs to preach Statedly, with a view to such organization"

In accordance with instructions of Presbytery public notice was given from the pulpit of the First & Second Presb. Church, & also in the Presbytn Banner & Advocate, & in the daily city papers, that W<sup>r</sup> Jacobs would commence Stated Services in said Edifice on Sabb. afternoon of Jan'y 24. with a view to organize a Presbytn Church

The attendance on the first, & subsequent Sabbaths was so encouraging that, on Sabb



Feb. 7. notice was given that the Committee of  
the Presby. of Ohio would meet on the follow-  
ing Wednesday Evg. (Feb. 10) to organize the  
Central Presbyt. Church of Pittsburgh.  
Committee accordingly met, and, after  
a sermon by Rev. W. Jacobus, the Ser-  
vice of organization was opened with pray-  
er by Rev. Wm Payton. Nineteen persons  
presented their certificates which, being  
in due form, they were received as mem-  
bers of the Church. On motion of W. Jacobus  
the members proceeded to complete the  
organization of the Central Presb. Church  
by the election of Officers, as follows: Luke  
Comis & John C. Davison were nominated  
for Elders, & no other names being submit-  
ted, they were unanimously elected. Sam-  
uel M W was nominated for the office of  
Deacon, & no other name being submitted  
he was unanimously elected. The persons  
elected, having previously held their office,  
were duly installed.



On 17 Feb. 1858 at a meeting of the congregation regularly convened, W. Jacobson was unanimously called to be Pastor - The call was held by the Pastor Elect under advisement, with the understanding that would serve them to the best of his ability his duties to the Theological Sem. being ways first in order of claim.

It is noteworthy that, in filling the blank in the call with the item of Salary, the Pastor Elect desired that the people of that time, so few in number, and under so much incumbrance of a \$9,000 debt, should not be obligated to him for any sum. They however chose to insert in the Call; to which they voluntarily added \$200. before the year end. The Salary was then raised to \$100.

A flourishing Sabbath School was well sustained, with an average attendance of 100 and, at the first report to Presby April 1858, two months after the organization,



the Church membership had increased from 9 to 56.

In Feb. 1860 two years had elapsed, and it became expedient to elect additional officers. The Ch. membership had now reached <sup>105</sup>~~100~~ and two Elders & three deacons were elected. The Elders were Geo. S. Bryan & W<sup>r</sup> James King who was already a Deacon, and the Deacons were W<sup>r</sup> Wm A Hallock, Wm Wm D. Pissel & Jos. M. Long.

In the year 1862 it seemed expedient to consummate the Pastoral Relation, which had been kept in abeyance since the organization and, on Jan'y 14. 1862 the installation took place. Rev W<sup>r</sup> Howard preached the sermon, & also gave the charge to the Pastor, & Rev. Richard Lea gave the charge to the people. This year occur the largest access to the Membership, 86 having been added swelling the list to 191. The Salary, at this time was increased to \$1,000.

The actual installing of the Pastor gave



a fresh impulse to the Church, adding new confidence in the permanency of the relation against the rumor which prevail that, in case the ministerial union was but temporary & unreliable. And it was found by the time that the objections which had been broached in Presbytery had yielded, so far as to consummate the relation without delay.

In two years after the installation, the membership having now increased to 230, seemed fit that a further addition should be made to the officers; accordingly the Ruling Elders were elected Oct 8. 1864. Robert Wray - Arch. M. Marshall & Sam. Clarke, & one deacon Mr. Saiah Dickey.

The steady progress of the Church was further manifest when, in the following year 1865 a movement was made to remove the debt that had been resting on the Church since it came into our hands. The Mortgage Interest amounted to  $7.375 \frac{16}{100}$  dollars. Which was raised in sums chiefly of \$500 each



there was also a ground rent of \$400 which was partly provided for and, during the year the aggregate collections & expenditures were \$10,861. The Pastor's salary was, at this date \$1200. The year following it was raised to \$1400. The Children Enrolled in Sabb. School at Morning & afternoon sessions were 656. Average attendance being 508 including both sittings. The Superintendents were A M Marshall & J. P. Smith. During this year the Pastor's health, & other circumstances required a leave of absence of five months. It was in this year that our excellent Ruling Elder John S. Garrison took his dismissal, with free consent of Pastor & Elders, to aid in founding a new church near to his residence at Bellefield.

The public beneficence of the Church after payment of the debt, increased the Congregational column from \$2000. to nearly \$7000. ann. for the two subsequent years, & after that to nearly \$8000.



Almost continually have the gentle dew  
of Divine Grace distill'd upon our Church,  
the most precious event in our history  
in 1867 as a harvest year of ingathering  
52 having been added to our membership.  
This was followed by the decennial 1868  
when we celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
of our Church with suitable festivities. And  
through these ten years there had been received  
a total of 446 members - there had been only  
13 deaths in that interval - A comparative  
view of this infant enterprise, with its ex-  
posed disadvantages of the house, & of its  
location, showed that the three older  
Churches had received, respectively 524, 446  
& 379 members, & the Centr. Ch. had received  
in the same time 446.

While this Church was largely adding  
its membership, it was truly aiding other  
Church Enterprises; ~~having furnished~~ ~~more~~  
~~families~~ by giving of its membership, & of  
means to build up other Church enter-



ing is - having furnished more families & more  
important material aid than any other  
church towards the founding of that flour-  
ishing organization at Swisvale. One  
from Eden W A M Marshall for many  
years conducted a large & prosperous Miss-  
ion Sabb. School, & one of our members,  
Mr Glenay Graham, who is still active  
in our communion, superintended a Sab-  
bath Sch. in 8<sup>th</sup> ward Pittsburgh. Besides  
this we had the distinguished Jones in  
1870 to send to India one of our most es-  
timable & useful young ladies as a mis-  
sionary to the women of that land. The  
ladies of our Ch. contributed largely to her  
equipment, & have undertaken her sup-  
port upon the field; so that in far off  
India one of our members is laboring ef-  
ficiently as the representative of the  
Centr. Presby. Ch.

In June 1870 another Election of Officers  
was held, resulting in the choice of



Saml. B. Ewing, Joseph F. Smith, James  
A. Clarke & Isaac Hickey as Ruling  
Elders. Mr Clarke, by his removal to  
Detroit having served his Ch. Comm.  
with us, but having returned, was not  
re-elected. Mr Isaac Hickey declined  
the office, & proper to serve in the ca-  
pacity of Deacon, to which he had been  
elected previously.

But the crown of our Church Enterprise  
& influence is found in the grand me-  
morial work of 1870. 71. An contribution  
for objects entirely outside of ourselves, and  
not, as in so many cases, for more local  
home objects of the congregation. Reached  
to \$17,500. for a membership of 282. This  
was in addition to the ordinary contribu-  
tions for the year, which amounted  
to \$7,058. The grand total of our contribu-  
tions for the Memorial year reached a  
sum of \$24,558. averaging nearly \$100  
per member.



In Review of the untold blessings which  
have crowned the Pastorate of St Jacobus  
this Church & Congregation would place on re-  
cord her thankfulness to our Heavenly  
Father - what She has been, during those  
years, as a witness for the Master - what,  
by her works of charitable benevolence & en-  
terprise, in sustaining the various Boards  
from Gen. Assembly &c &c has been due,  
under God, mainly to the wisdom, ener-  
gy, & self denying labor of St M. W. Jacobus.

During all this period of our history  
the question of a New Church Edifice has  
been occasionally agitated. Various com-  
mittees have been appointed, & various plans  
suggested, none of which met the approval  
of the Congregation; Our people being so  
widely scattered, it was found impossible  
to find a location that would accommodate  
the different portions of our membership - a  
large & influential portion favored removal  
to Alleghany, while another favored a



division of the property, with the view of building two Churches - the Congregation fully harmonizing on the policy of leaving the present location

The Pastor, early in ~~1877~~ the fall of 1871, finding that the two lines of street railway, running in front of the Church had made it almost impossible to be heard, especially when the front windows were open, convened the Officers, for the purpose of discussing the future of the Church. After several meetings it was finally voted with entire unanimity, that a committee be appointed to arrange for accommodation elsewhere, temporarily, and that with view of selling the Ch. property & locating elsewhere. The Committee met a committee of the Unit Ch., who, with distinguished courtesy & kindness, extended to our Church a most cordial invitation to joint worship & service in their Sanctuary. Accordingly, at a large meeting,



The congregation, duly convened, it was  
voted, unanimously, & most cordially,  
no one dissenting, to sell these premises,  
to accept the invitation of the First Free  
Methodist Ch. - it was understood that the  
pastors would alternate in the preaching,  
that this would continue (in the lan-  
guage of the invitation) so long as it  
should seem agreeable to the Central Ch.

In such a state of transition it  
could not be expected that the Church  
would increase - heretofore, with all  
its local disadvantages, it had retained its  
members, & its strength - Our reports to the  
Presby. showing our columns well, and  
worthily filled.

Early in 1872 our Pastor called a meet-  
ing of the Officers of the Ch., to whom he  
communicated his intention, on the fol-  
lowing day (Sabb. Feb. 17) to announce  
the resignation of his charge, whereupon  
the following resolution was unanimously



voted" Resolved that the resignation  
our Pastor would be most seriously detri-  
mental to the interests of the Central Ch.  
and that he be earnestly requested to with-  
hold it.

On March 16. at a meeting of the officers  
the Pastor stated that, for several reasons  
the time was at hand for our removal  
the First Church, and after free con-  
sultation, it was moved by Elder Smith  
that it is the unanimous sense of the  
joint meeting, that we remove from our  
house after tomorrow, & begin our joint  
service with the First Ch. on the following  
Sabb. (March 24)

The Lord's Supper was administered  
the closing exercises in this house (March  
17. 1872 - and the announcement made  
to the congregation that our next service  
would be held in the First Ch.

Our report to Presby. this year shows  
contributions to the Ch. Boards \$4,138.<sup>75</sup>



Congregational \$3.847. Total \$7.985. Membership reported 289.

It may with truth be said that no congregation in our land has passed through a period of 14 yrs in a more unbroken continuity.

It was soon discovered that the plan, so unanimously adopted, of joint worship with the Unit Ch. was not productive of the best results. A very small proportion of our congregation was found in attendance. Many of our best members & families attending the services of other churches. And, during the period of union withdrawing entirely and taking letters of dismission to the other churches in our communion. While many, we hear, have united with other denominations, to aggravate our difficulties, our Pastor, on Nov. 12, 1872 tendered his resignation, on the ground of continued ill health. This was submitted Nov. 25, to a meeting of the congregation, who, with sincere regret,



accepted the resignation, agreeing to unite with him in his request to Presby. to dissolve the Pastoral relation.

Our condition was now such that, in order to avoid extinction, or absorption into other bodies, a change must be inaugurated. Some nine months had elapsed since we departed from our homestead, and, at a meeting of the officers of the Ch. it was resolved that we resume worship in our own Ch. Building - This was submitted to a meeting of the congregation duly convened Dec. 30, and a resolution passed that the congregation resume worship there as soon as practicable. Many of our influential members opposed this movement, and withdrew from our conference.

On Jan'y 6, 1873 worship was resumed in this house, and on Feb. 2 Rev. Dr. Hornblower commenced his ministrations as Supply Supply, which continued through the year. Our report of Membership,



going out in 1872 was 289. on our return 1873  
we reported 176, with still further dismissals  
& prospect - The actual dismissals to this  
date are 144, which, together with deaths,  
loss of members from other causes, has reduced  
our membership to 105; yet, in this interval  
we received into our communion 48 members.  
In order to bring our rents within the  
means of those of moderate incomes, the  
trustees have made a large reduction in  
rates -

Notwithstanding the large reduction in  
our membership, the old spirit remains,  
which is exhibited in our contributions, viz  
1873 for Congregational Exp. \$3.280. and to  
Ch. Boards over \$2.000. -

In 1874, with a membership of 129. our Congre-  
gational column shows \$2.178. Ch. Boards &  
miscellaneous \$1820. In 1875. Congregational \$3.201.  
Ch. Boards \$2078. with 109 members, & in 1876  
with the same membership, Congregational \$3.234,  
Ch. Boards & \$2,558. A large contribution



per Capita than, probably, any other Ch.  
in our Presby. - to this latter sum may be  
added the <sup>Extra</sup> contributions of three members  
\$155. towards the liquidation of debt of  
Hors. Miss. Board

On 12 Jan'y 1874 a Committee was  
appointed at a Congregt'l meeting to se-  
lect a Queatable Pastor - who reported  
March 30, recommending Rev. J. M. Mel.  
of the Perryville Ch. Presby of Allegh.  
An election was held April 13, which  
resulted in an almost unanimous vote  
favor of the candidate; and Commission  
were appointed to place the call in the  
hands of Mr Smith, as also to present the  
call to Presby. Mr Smith having ac-  
ced the call, & no objections having been  
raised by his Presby. his installation, as Pa-  
stor of this Congregation was duly consum-  
mated. In Dec. 1875 having received  
a call from the Presby. Ch. of Canonsburg  
Presby. of Pittsburgh, he tendered his resigna-



the Pastor of this Ch. which was acted on at a  
congregational meeting, duly convened Dec. 13. 1875.  
the Congregation agreeing to unite with him in  
his application to Presby. for a dissolution of the  
Pastoral Relation.

At the same meeting the Congregation acted  
on a proposition from the 7<sup>th</sup> Presb. Ch with re-  
ference to a Union of the two Churches -  
After several meetings of the officers of the  
Central Ch. with those of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ch. an ar-  
rangement was finally agreed upon, at  
a meeting of Congregation Jan'y 18. 1876 for  
joint worship of the two congregations -  
the arrangement to continue until other-  
wise determined. The arrangement  
looks forward to the building of a new  
church on Centre Avenue.

In final Review of our condition as a  
Church, we have great cause for thankfulness  
our Divine Master that, notwithstanding  
the adverse circumstances connected with our  
removal in 1872. He has still Vouchsafed to



us, marked evidence of His favor. This is  
shown in the warm interest manifested  
in the Board of the Ch., an active & ad-  
vanced missionary organization, a well conducted  
Sabb. School, and especially in the  
strong interest manifested in our  
Prayer meetings; the attendance be-  
ing fully equal to that of the earlier years  
of our history, when our membership was  
more than double; if, as has been, no-  
tably remarked "The Prayer Meeting  
is the Spiritual Thermometer of the Church."  
May we not cheerfully commit our  
Cause unto Him who doeth all things  
well; and who has so wisely & graciously  
guided us in former years; and, faithfully  
using the talent committed unto  
us, joyfully await the coming of the  
Master.

It is but proper to add that a  
marked impetus has been given to our  
organization since our temporary



union with the 7<sup>th</sup> Church. The interest  
manifested in the very acceptable minis-  
trations of their Pastor Rev H. L.  
Enos; and in our social intercommu-  
nity with the members of that Church as to  
lead to the hope that the two Congrega-  
tions will, at no distant day, be united  
in a stronger bond - a united  
Pastorate



